



# Agent reps talent with disabilities

By LESLEY DAW

**S**usan Charness is a talent agent who is passionate about making sure people with disabilities are represented in advertising and the entertainment industry.

Spirit Synott (left) models on the Shopping Channel and Rod Kincaid (right) has appeared in TV commercials for Canadian Tire and Eaton's among others. Both have found work through Charness.

There is nothing unusual about them

except that both use a wheelchair. Based in Toronto, Charness specializes in placing people with disabilities.

Charness calls the CEOs of companies to point out to them that people with disabilities should be represented in their advertising. She says there are 4.2 million people with disabilities in Canada, and they have a lot of spending clout. Her pitch seems to work—she has placed people in ads for companies like the Royal Bank, Sears, Zellers, and the Bay and has recently signed up BiWay.

Synott has appeared in commercials for Levi Strauss and Bell Canada and both actors have appeared in *Body Break* fitness spots. Kincaid has a different perspective on the spots he appears in as he has also worked as a copywriter for the past 10 years, mainly freelance with agencies in both Toronto and Montreal. He is currently working with Toronto-based graphic design firm Sherman Laws.

Charness' passion is one that is close to her heart—she has had polio and walks using crutches.